

O 010317Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8997
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
INFO NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 001082
BT
AIDAC

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID
STATE FOR MPITOTTI
AID/W FOR ANE/SA
AID/W FOR DCHA/FFP
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA KLUU, ACONVERY, RTHAYER,
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA WBERGER AND TROGERS
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA MROGERS
USMISSION GENEVA FOR NKYLOH

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: Sri Lanka Northern Districts Floods Disaster
Declaration

SUMMARY

¶1. The week of November 24, 2008, heavy rains pelted northern and eastern districts of Sri Lanka affecting more than 240,000 people. These heavy rains, caused by a cyclonic weather system, further aggravated the already challenging humanitarian situation in these same districts into a crisis affecting six districts in the North and East. The head of the Sri Lankan Disaster Management Center (DMC) has specifically requested US emergency assistance. As a result of this request and due to the crisis conditions faced by this population, the U.S. Ambassador hereby declares a natural disaster in the Northern districts of Sri Lanka. I have determined that the damage caused by the floods in these areas is of sufficient magnitude to warrant external assistance, that the GSL would welcome USG assistance, and that it is in the USG interest to provide assistance to the disaster victims. The US Embassy and USAID Sri Lanka consulted the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Senior Regional Advisor, who concurred with our initial assessment of needs and appropriateness of USG assistance. If additional resources are required, the Embassy will again consult with OFDA for advice. At this point, I am exercising my authority for \$ 50,000 emergency and as a result of consultations with OFDA I am requesting an additional \$ 50,000 for a total of \$ 100,000 for Sri Lanka. End summary.

Flood Situation in the North

¶2. Extensive flooding in the northern and eastern districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar Vavuniya and Trincomalee has severely affected the IDPs and conflict-affected people in these six districts. In Jaffna district alone, reports indicate that 118,273 people (32,026 families) have been affected and 36,116 individuals (9,984 families) are displaced to 135 camps. In Mannar district 23,104 people (5,136 families) have been affected in 32 villages by floods, while 7,256 people are affected in Trincomalee district. It is difficult to obtain the exact figures

in the Vanni region, where government security forces and the LTTE are engaged in ongoing hostilities and humanitarian agencies have very limited access. According to Disaster Management Center (DMC) and UN estimates, around 21,200 families are affected and 2,036 families have been displaced by the flooding. Further, about 84,000 people have been affected in Mullaitivu district. OCHA predicts that there are at least 24,000 families most vulnerable and in need immediate assistance of shelter, sanitation facilities and clean drinking water in the Vanni.

13. Currently, there are no official figures for the number of deaths caused by flooding, but in Jaffna district alone it has been reported that there are 1,941 houses fully damaged and 5,104 partially damaged. Property damage in the Vanni is still being assessed by the DMC but reports indicate approximately 1,000 permanent houses and 6,000 temporary shelters fully damaged, worsening the humanitarian condition of the IDPs trapped in Vanni. DMC reports state that 163 km of roads have been flooded, damaged or washed off with most roads currently impassable. Electricity supply has been cut off and schools have been closed down until further notice in many affected areas.

14. Although there are sufficient stocks of relief supplies in Jaffna which can cover the needs of displaced people for 2-3 days, the government agent in Jaffna has requested outside assistance from the UN and humanitarian agencies until the emergency situation recedes. Further, DMC has requested the assistance of the UN as this is beyond the capacity of the Sri Lankan government to provide assistance to the flood victims. DMC is coordinating with the military and government to get the necessary clearance to transport relief items which goes to Wanni in order to make the process faster.

15. In light of the above, I hereby declare a disaster in relation to the current floods in Northern districts of Sri Lanka. I have determined that the damage caused by the floods in these areas is of sufficient magnitude to warrant external assistance, and that the GSL would welcome USG assistance; and that it is in USG interest to provide assistance to the disaster victims.

16. At this point, I am exercising my authority for \$ 50,000 emergency and as a result of consultations with OFDA I am requesting an additional \$ 50,000 for a total of \$ 100,000 to provide relief to those affected by the floods. This money will be used for provision of shelter, sanitation facilities and other NFRIs to flood victims. We are planning to support UN agencies depending on the ground needs to provide disaster related assistance to affected people.

BLAKE